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DEPT FOR ISN/CATR, EUR/NCE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/30/2016
TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ETTC](#) [KSTC](#) [YM](#) [BU](#)
SUBJECT: YEMEN ORDERS 5000 MORE BULGARIAN THERMOBARIC
WEAPONS

REF: A. STATE 71303

[1](#)B. SOFIA 760

Classified By: DCM Jeffrey Levine, for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph 4.

[1](#)2. (S) On June 29, Ivelina Bachkevanova and Christo Atanasov of the Ministry of Energy and Economy's Export Control Division called us in to inform us that they had received an export application for 5000 thermobaric rounds (Model GTB-7VS, produced by the Bulgarian manufacturer VMZ) bound for the Yemeni Ministry of Defense. At the world market price of approximately \$750 per thermobaric RPG round, this deal would be worth roughly \$3.75m. This purchase comes in addition to the 10 such rounds already purchased by Yemen (reftel B). We responded by reiterating the concerns previously delivered in reftel A demarche, specifically emphasizing our concerns about possible diversion to terrorist groups.

[1](#)3. (S) The MOE's decision to raise this issue with us during the export clearance process is consistent with their previous commitment (reftel B) to take our concerns into account prior to making any similar sales to Yemen. On a personal level, however, our contacts appeared inclined to allow the sale. They emphasized that no brokers were involved, that the order originated from the Yemeni MOD, that it was verified by the Yemeni MFA, and that the relevant signatures had been confirmed by the Bulgarian Embassy in Sanaa. Bachkevanova remarked that "everyone always says (the Yemenis) divert weapons" but that she had never seen any concrete data to back up such claims. She asked us if we could provide more detailed information on the threat, and promised to provide it to the Export Control Commission in order to help them make a more informed decision. She also assured us that this particular license application was on a "slow track."

[1](#)4. (S) ACTION REQUEST: Post requests additional information (at the Rel/Bulgaria level) on the threat posed by corruption and lax stockpile security in Yemen, as well as information on the major destinations to which diverted arms are transferred. We believe that such information may represent our best chance of convincing the Commission to turn down the sale.

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